DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 971 TM 035 161

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Beachler, Judith |
| TITLE | Results of the Alternative Calendar Survey: A Survey of Faculty, Classified Staff and Administrators at California Community Colleges That Have Moved from an 18-Week Semester to a Compressed Calendar. |
| INSTITUTION | Los Rios Community Coll. District, Sacramento, CA. Office of Institutional Research. |
| PUB DATE | 2003-04-00 |
| NOTE | 11p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | For full text: http://irweb.losrios.edu. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Research (143) |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Administrators; *College Faculty; *Community Colleges; Higher Education; *School Schedules; Surveys |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Alternative School Calendars; *California; Los Rios Community College District CA |

ABSTRACT

From December 2002 through February 2003, Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD), California, administrators invited key faculty members, classified staff, and administrators of California community colleges that have moved from an 18 week semester to a compressed 15- or 16-week semester to share their colleges' experiences through the change. All individuals were asked to respond to a Web-based survey that included questions about the effects of the compressed calendar on students and institutional management. The results of this study reflect the opinions of 15 classified staff members, 54 administrators, and 139 faculty members employed by 29 colleges that have implemented compressed calendars. Of 22 issues related to the effects of calendar change on students, 7 were identified as having a positive effect by one-fourth or more of the respondents. More than one third of faculty believe that students are more successful at completing their courses, fewer withdraw, and more have increased free time. Five of the 22 issues were identified as having a negative effect on students by more than one-quarter of the faculty respondents. One of these, quality of instruction, was also viewed as a positive impact. About 40% of faculty believe that the shorter semester adversely affects student anxiety. Staff and administrators identified 4 of 22 issues as having a positive impact, and only 1 issue was identified by staff and administrators as having a negative impact by more than one-quarter of respondents: time for extracurricular activities. Findings make it clear that there are both pros and cons in moving to a compressed calendar. There are many advantages for the institution, and the change appears to appeal to many students, although there are concerns about those who struggle. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 479 971

# Results of the Alternative Calendar Survey

## A Survey of Faculty, Classified Staff and Administrators at California Community College

## That Have Moved from an 18-Week Semester to a Compressed Calendar

April 2003

Judith Beachler
Office of Institutional Research
Los Rios Community College District

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. A. Beachler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

TM035161

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TM TMTR 0174

# Results of the Alternative Calendar Survey

## A Survey of Faculty, Classified Staff and Administrators at California Community Colleges That Have Moved from an 18-Week Semester to a Compressed Calendar

By Judith Beachler, Director of the Office of Institutional Research
Los Rios Community College District, Sacramento, California

**April 2003**

From December 2002 through February 2003, the Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD) Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Los Rios College Federation of Teachers President and the LRCCD Academic Senate President invited key faculty members, classified staff and administrators of California community colleges that have moved from an 18-week semester to a compressed 15- or 16-week semester to share their colleges' experiences through this process of change. All individuals were asked to respond to a web-based survey that included a series of questions about the effects of the compressed calendar on students and upon institutional management. Faculty were asked to respond to a series of questions about the effects of the compressed calendar on faculty and the Classified Staff and Administrators responded to a series of questions about the effects of the compressed calendar upon them.

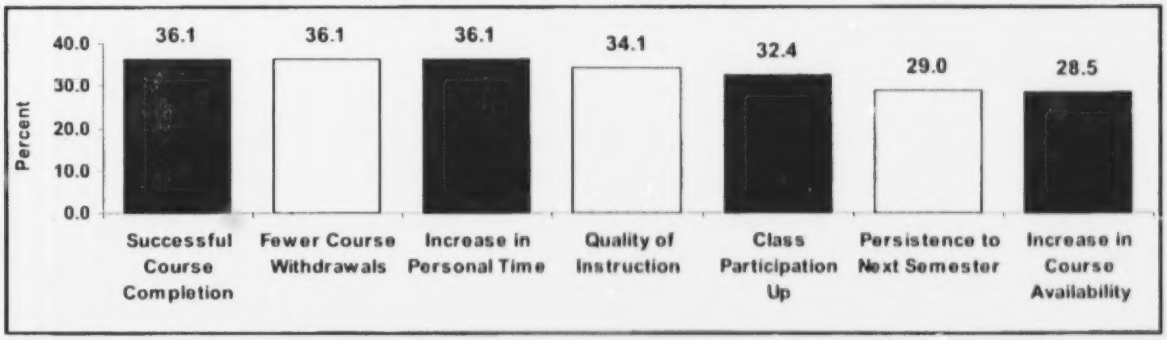
The results of this study reflect the opinions of 15 classified staff members, 54 administrators and 139 faculty members employed by 29 colleges that have implemented compressed calendars. What follows is a summary of the findings of this study.

### Part I: Effects of the Alternative Calendar on Students

#### Opinions of Faculty Members

Of the 22 issues related to the effects of the calendar change upon students, seven were identified as having a positive effect by one-fourth or more respondents. More than a third of the faculty believe that students are more successful at completing their courses, fewer withdraw from courses and faculty perceive that students have experienced increase in the amount of free time as a result of moving to a compressed calendar. Other benefits viewed as positive by one-fourth or more include improvement in the quality of instruction, an increase in class participation, persistence from one semester to the next and an increase in course availability.

**Chart 1**
**Items Where Students Were Positively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Faculty Perceptions**




Of the 22 issues related to the effects of the calendar change upon students, five issues were identified as having negative effects on students by more than one-fourth of the faculty respondents. Interestingly, one of the five issues was also viewed as a positive impact -- quality of instruction. Comments provided by faculty about these seemingly

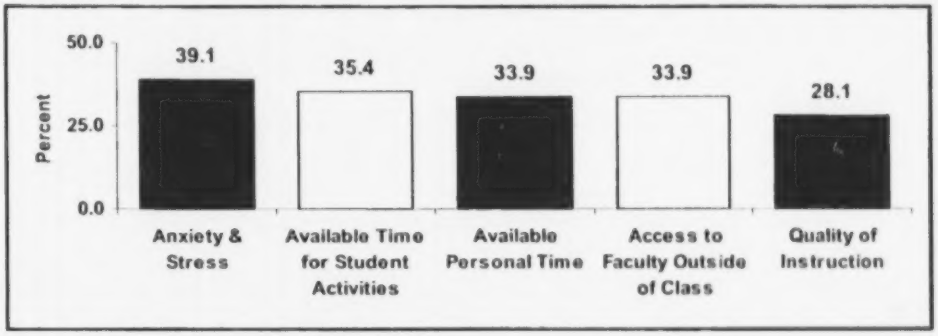


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

contradictory results provide clarity for this. Some faculty added comments explaining that that with the calendar change, they re-worked their course outlines to eliminate content that might not be as relevant, while others added comments explaining that time lost (primarily in the math, science, technical and ESL areas), hampered their ability to provide adequate coverage of important course material.

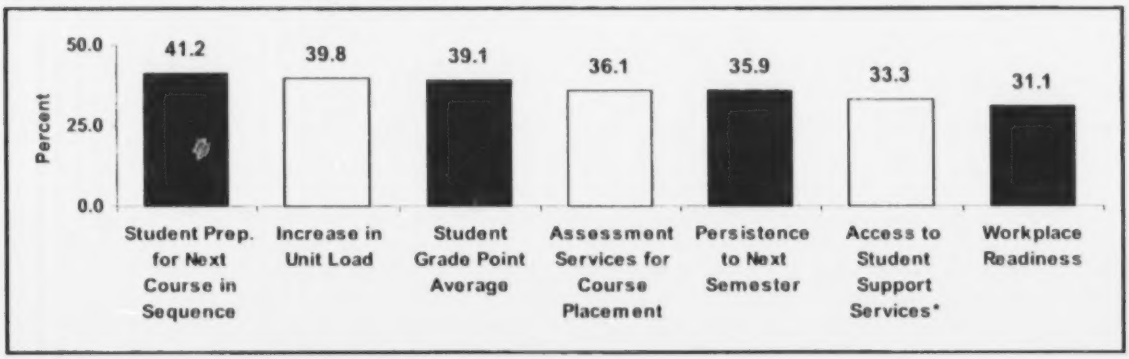
Chart 2 shows that almost 40% of the faculty believe that the shorter semester adversely effects anxiety and stress levels for students, while over one-third suggested that time for student activities, personal time and access to faculty are negatively affected.

**Chart 2**
**Items Where Students Were Negatively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Faculty Perceptions**




One-third or more of the faculty found that there is no difference in seven of the 22 items effecting students, as pointed out in Chart 3.

**Chart 3**
**Items Where Students Were Not Affected One Way or the Other by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Faculty Perceptions**




* All student support services, with the exception of counseling services.

There were several issues where more than one-third of the faculty indicated that they simply **did not know** what the impact was:

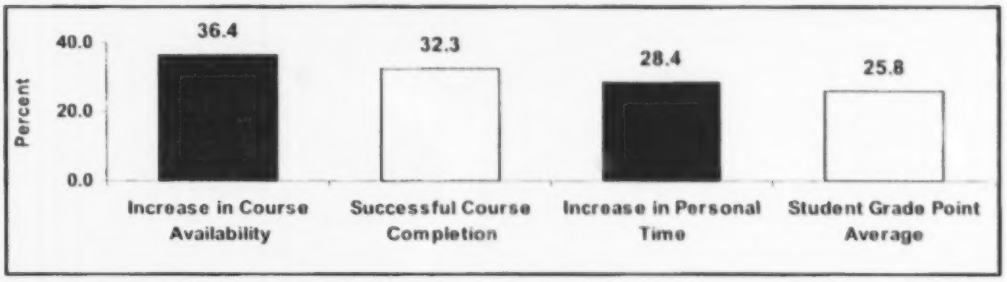
- Number of associate degree awards by 74.8%
- Number of certificate awards by 71.2%
- Transfer preparation by 51.1%
- Access to counseling services by 48.9%
- Access to other student support services by 47.0%
- Availability of time in tutorial labs by 38.3%
- Increase in unit load by 38.3%
- Workplace readiness 34.1%

## Opinions of Classified Staff and Administrators

Of the 22 issues related to the effects of the calendar change upon students, four were identified as having a positive effect by one-fourth or more respondents. Chart 4 shows that more than one-third of the respondents believe that

there is an increase in course availability, while almost one-third believes that successful course completion rates improve. Slightly more than one-fourth suggests that students' personal time increases and their GPAs improve.

**Chart 4**
**Items Where Students Were Positively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar:**
**Classified Staff & Administrators Perceptions**

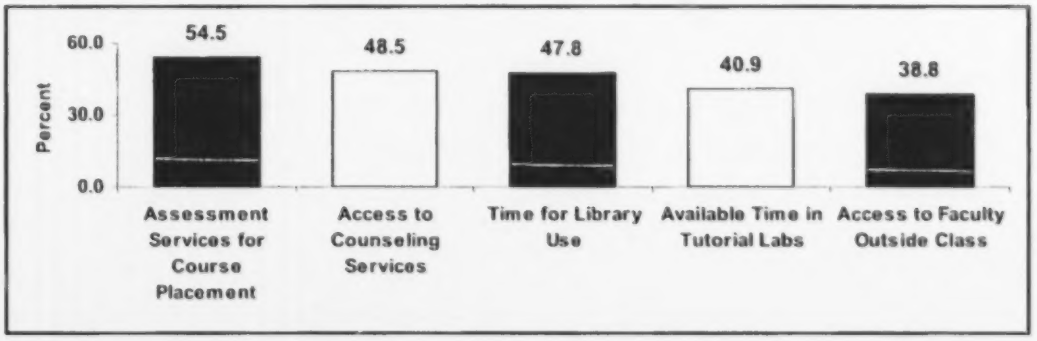



Of the 22 issues related to the effects of the calendar change upon students, only **one** item was identified by classified staff and administrators as having **negative** effects by more than one-fourth of respondents:

- Time for extra curricular activities by 28.8%

Chart 5 shows that for five of the 22 items, more than one-third of the classified staff and administrators who responded view no difference between a full 18-week term and the term that is compressed to 15 or 16 weeks. More than half of the respondents see no difference in the provision of assessment services for course placement and almost half see no difference for student time to access counseling services and time for library use.

**Chart 5**
**Items Where Students Were Not Affected One Way or the Other by the Move to a Compressed Calendar:**
**Classified Staff & Administrators Perceptions**




A fairly large number of classified and administrative respondents do not know the impact of the compressed calendar upon students. More than one-third were uncertain about 14 of the 22 issues, and for many of these issues more than half were uncertain. Part of this uncertainty stems from the fact that the compressed calendar is very new to some of these colleges and there simply has not been enough time to evaluate some of the impacts on students. Faculty members, on the other hand, have more direct contact with many students and are in a better position to evaluate all but the long-term impacts, such as degree/certificate awards, for example. Another part of this uncertainty may exist because these employee groups are simply not in a position to intuitively know what all the impacts are on students and their colleges have not yet had time to conduct their own internal studies. Large proportions of classified and administrative staff indicate **uncertainty about the impact of the compressed calendar upon students for:**

- Increase in class participation (65.7%)
- Associate degree awards (65.2%)
- Certificate awards (65.2%)
- Transfer preparation (60.6%)
- Student persistence to the next semester (50.8%)

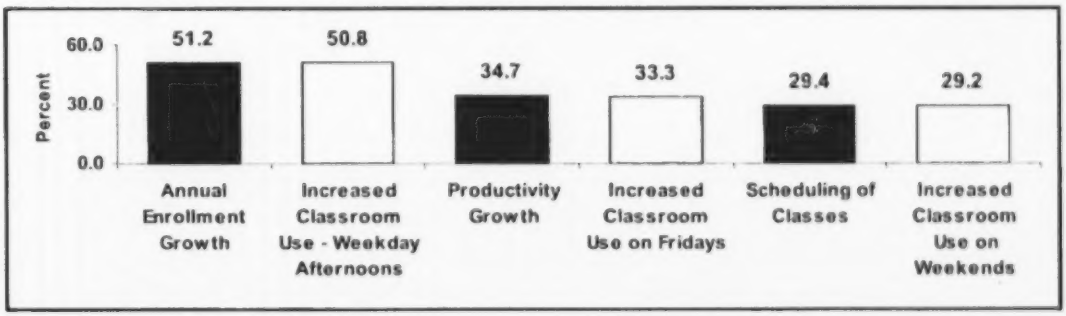
- Student GPAs (50.0%)
- Successful course completion (44.6%)
- Fewer course withdrawals (43.3%)
- Student preparation for next course in sequence (43.3%)
- Quality of instruction (42.4%)
- Increase in unit load (39.1%)
- Reduced anxiety and stress levels (38.8%)
- Workplace readiness (36.4%)
- Increase in free/personal time (34.3%)

## Part II: Effects of the Alternative Calendar on Institutional Management

### Opinions of Faculty Members

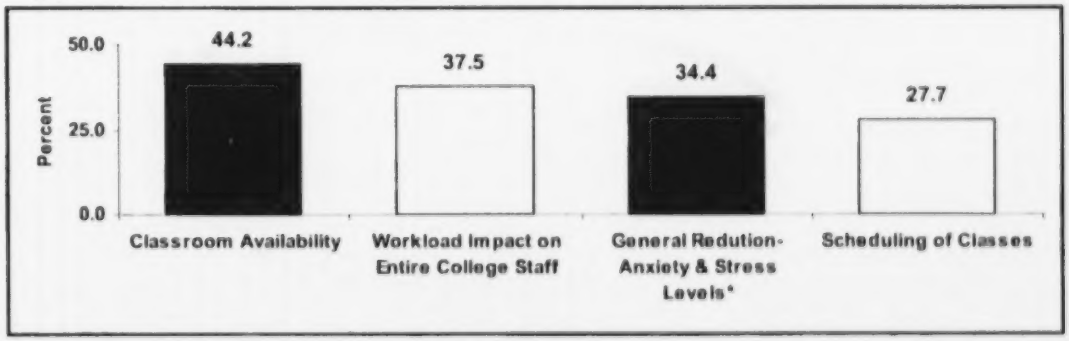
The Alternative Calendar Survey provided respondents the opportunity to share their opinions about 14 items related to institutional management. Six of the 14 were viewed as positive by the faculty respondents, as indicated in Chart 6. Both annual enrollment growth and increased classroom use on weekday afternoons is seen as a positive effect from moving to a compressed calendar. Over one-third view productivity growth and increased use of classrooms on Fridays as a positive impact. Slightly less, but still fairly high proportions view scheduling of classes and increased classroom use on weekends as a positive impact.

**Chart 6**
**Institutional Management Items That Were Positively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Faculty Perceptions**




Four of the 14 items were viewed negatively as a result of moving to a compressed calendar by one-fourth or more of the faculty members who responded. A large proportion see the move as negative in terms of classroom availability, while slightly fewer view the workload impact upon the entire college to be negative. Implementation of the compressed calendar has a negative impact upon the stress and anxiety levels campus-wide and on scheduling of classes, as summarized in Chart 7.

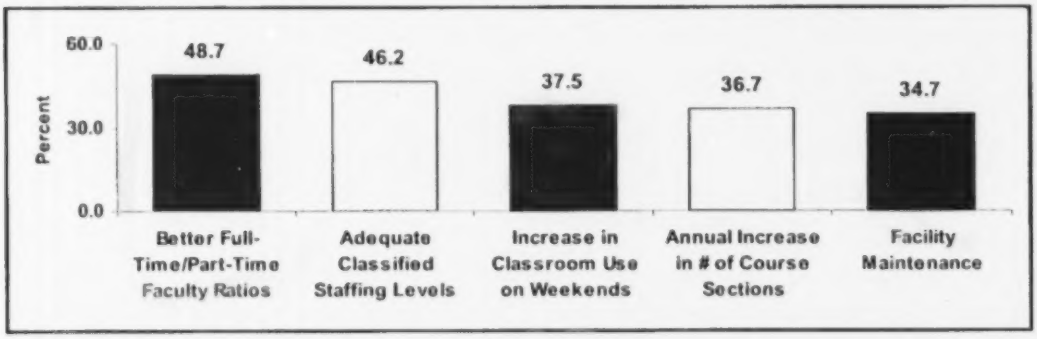
**Chart 7**
**Institutional Management Items That Were Negatively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Faculty Perceptions**




* General reduction in the anxiety and stress levels on entire college staff

There were also five items where at least one-third of the faculty respondents felt that there is no difference between the longer traditional calendar and the compressed calendar. These are summarized in Chart 8 below. Note that although there is a large proportion of faculty respondents who feel that moving to the compressed calendar increased weekend use of classes (29.4%), there is an even larger proportion who believe there is no difference (37.5%).

**Chart 8**
**Institutional Management Items Not Affected One Way or the Other by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Faculty Perceptions**



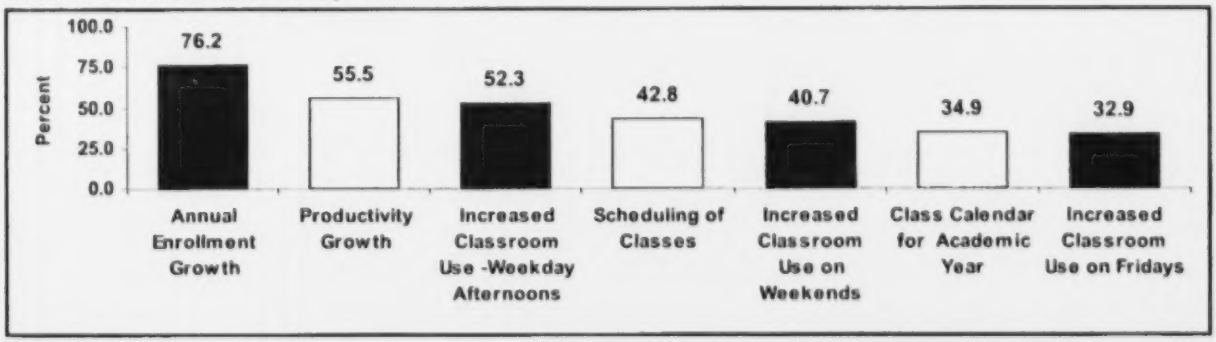

One-third or more faculty respondents **did not know the impact upon the following five institutional management issues:**

- Productivity growth (47.5%)
- Class calendar for each academic year (37.0%)
- Annual enrollment growth (35.3%)
- Adequate classified staffing levels (35.3%)
- Better full-time/part-time faculty ratios (34.5%)

## Opinions of Classified Staff and Administrators

Fairly high proportions of classified and administrative staff feel that there are many positive institutional management benefits in moving to a compressed calendar. Fairly high proportions of respondents -- approximately one-third or more -- viewed seven of the 14 items as a positive benefit. Over three-fourths indicate that annual enrollment growth is affected positively and over half indicate that productivity growth and increased classroom use in weekday afternoons is positively affected. Summarized in Chart 9, the remaining three items -- increase classroom use on weekends, the class calendar for each academic year and increased classroom use on Fridays -- are viewed positively by about one third or more.

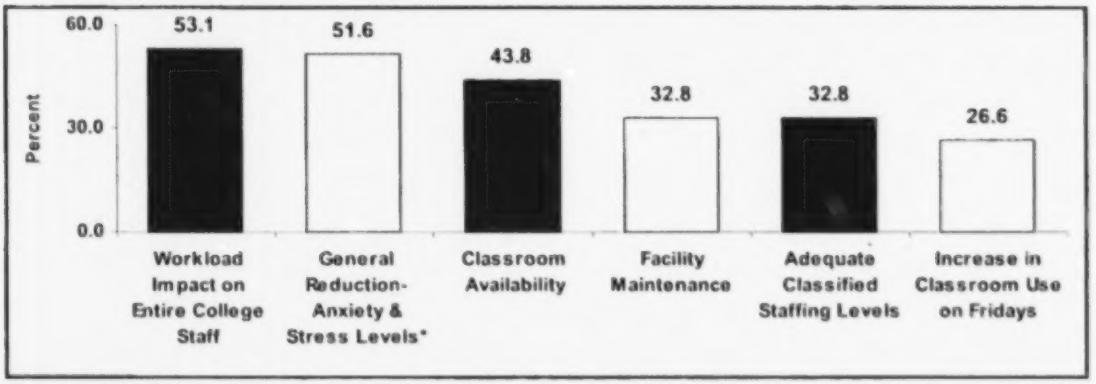
**Chart 9**
**Institutional Management Items That Were Positively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Classified Staff and Administrators Opinions**




On the other hand, Chart 10 shows there are also a number of items where one-fourth or more of the respondents feel there are negative impacts in terms of institutional management (six of the 14). More than half of the respondents indicate that there is a negative effect upon the workload of the entire college staff and more anxiety and stress on the entire college staff. Classroom availability is also viewed as a negative effect of the compressed calendar by 43.8% of

respondents, while roughly one-third-view facility maintenance and adequate classified staffing levels as a negative effect. Even though 32.9% believe there is a positive increase in the use of classes on Fridays, another 26.6% believe that there's a negative effect in the use of classes on Fridays. Open-ended comments explain this apparent discrepancy. While some colleges scheduled classes in such a way as to have more classes on Fridays, other colleges blocked classes on Mondays/Wednesdays and Tuesdays/Thursdays, excluding Friday classes. Fridays are then used for meetings, grading assignments, attending to college governance, and the like.

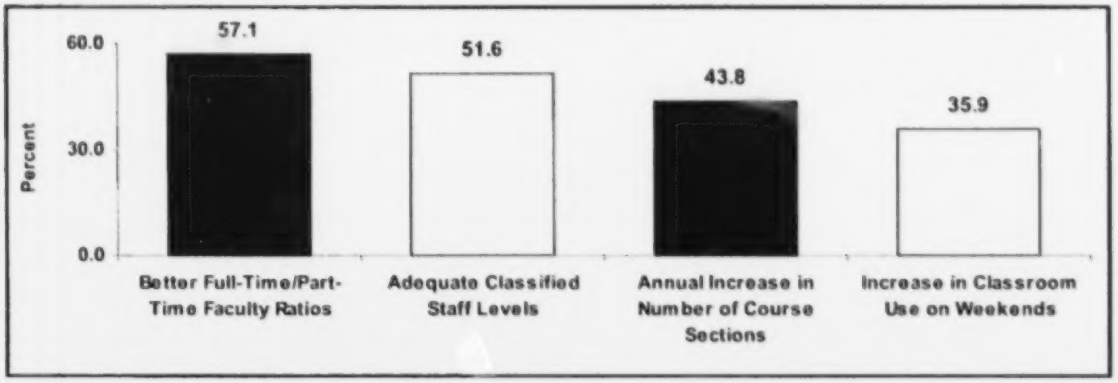
**Chart 10**
**Institutional Management Items That Were Negatively Affected by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Classified Staff and Administrators Perceptions**




* A general reduction in the anxiety and stress levels on entire college staff.

One-third or more of the respondents believe there is no difference in the following institutional management issues now that they have moved to a compressed calendar:

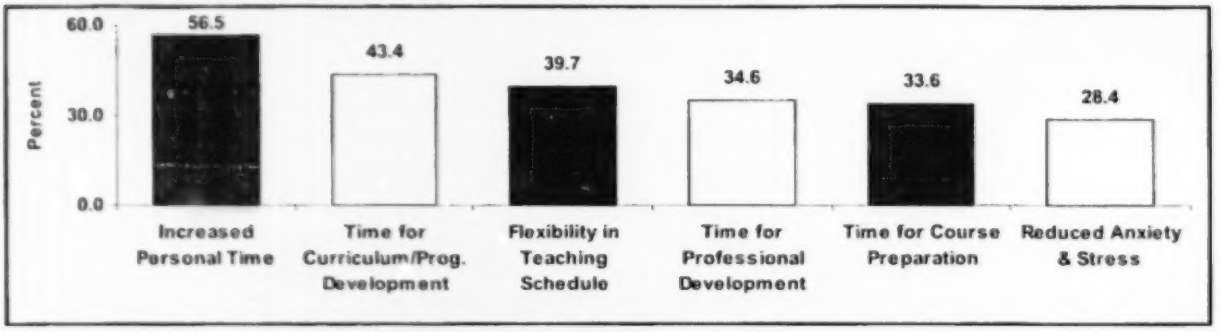
**Chart 11**
**Institutional Management Items Not Affected One Way or the Other by the Move to a Compressed Calendar: Classified Staff and Administrators**




## Part III:
## Faculty Opinions about the Effects of the Alternative Calendar on Them and on Their Work

Faculty respondents were asked to review 14 items related to the impact of the move to a compressed calendar on their ability to do their jobs. Positive impacts are seen on six of the 14 items by one-fourth or more of the respondents. Chart 12 shows that more than half of the faculty respondents feel they have more personal time, while 43.4% feel they have more time for curriculum and program development. Other positive effects include flexibility in teaching schedules, time for professional development, time for course preparation, and reduced anxiety and stress.

Chart 12
Items Viewed as Positively Impacting the Faculty Since Moving to a Compressed Calendar




However, fairly large numbers also saw negative impacts. All six of the items that are viewed as positive by one-fourth or more faculty respondents are also viewed as negative to an additional one-fourth or more respondents. **More than one-fourth of the faculty respondents saw negative impacts on all but two of the 14 items:**

- Available personal time by 29.8%
- Time for curriculum and program development by 31.8%
- Flexibility in teaching schedule by 35.9%
- Time for professional development by 31.5%
- Time for course preparation by 30.5%
- Reduced anxiety and stress by 40.0%
- Time for college governance by 45.1%
- Time for special tutoring sessions a faculty member may wish to provide by 35.1%
- Available time during the semester to assess the academic work of students by 29.7%
- Impact on adequate time available for lab/shop/clinic modes of instruction by 28.7%

The apparent discrepancy in the 28.4% who believe anxiety and stress are reduced and the 40.0% who believe it is increased was clarified by open-ended comments provided by faculty respondents. Many respondents focused upon the *loss of time during the actual semester* as a source of frustration, while other faculty members focused upon the *gain in time between semesters* that allowed more concentrated time to focus upon issues related to curriculum and program development, course revisions and professional development. Several faculty members commented upon both aspects.

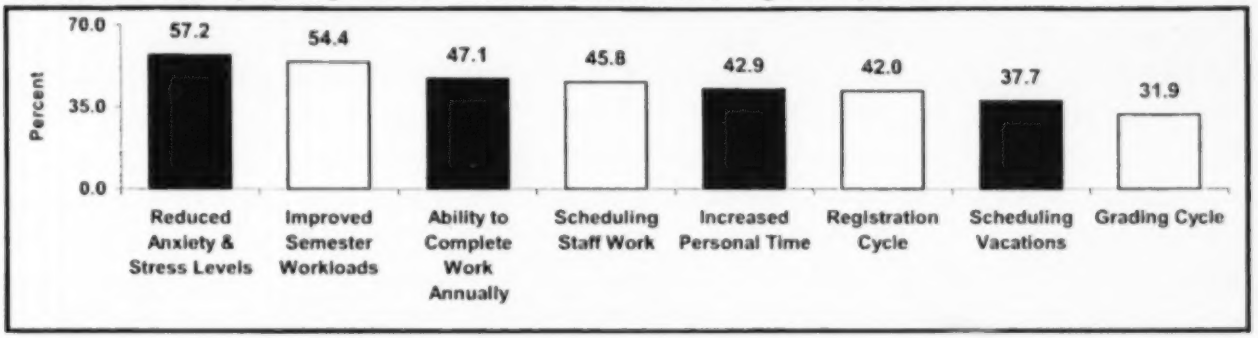
However, one-third or more additional respondents suggest that nine of the 14 items affecting faculty **are no different now since they have implemented a compressed calendar:**

- Larger class size by 71.0%
- Time for student office hours by 66.4%
- An increase in course load for part-time faculty by 57.7%
- Availability of sufficient library hours for faculty by 47.3%
- Time to assess academic work of students by 46.6%
- Time for special tutoring sessions they wish to provide by 39.7%
- Time for college governance by 35.1%
- Impact on adequate time for lab/shop/clinic mode by 34.9%
- Time for course preparation by 32.8%

## Part IV: Classified and Administrative Staff Opinions about the Effects of the Alternative Calendar on Them and on Their Work

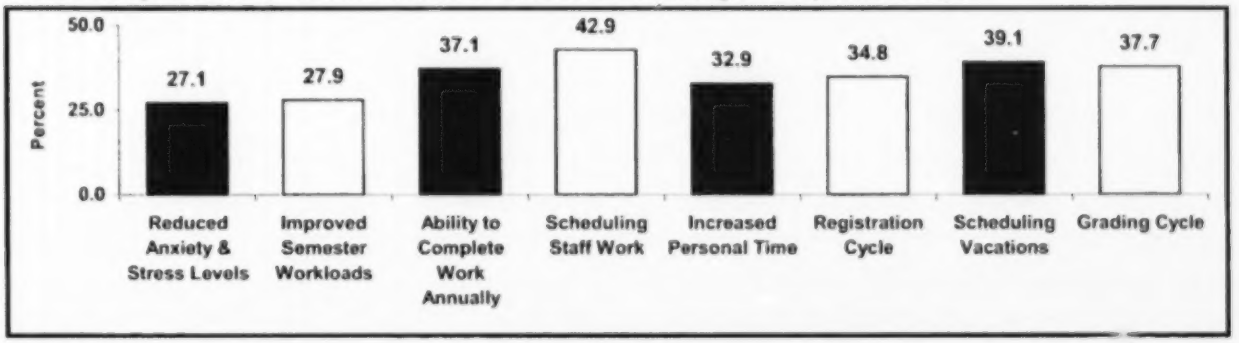
Classified staff and administrators were asked to review eight items related to the impact of the move to a compressed calendar on their ability to do their jobs. Chart 13 shows that fairly large proportions of classified staff and administrators viewed all eight items as having negative impacts since implementation of the compressed calendar.

Chart 13
Items Viewed as Negatively Impacting Classified Staff and Administrators Since Moving to a Compressed Calendar




Yet there are also high proportions that indicate that there are no differences between the traditional 18-week semester compared to the compressed calendar related to them and their work, even though the proportions who feel the impact is negative are generally higher. The proportions holding the view that the change has made no difference are as follow:

Chart 14
Items Viewed by Classified Staff and Administrators as Not Different Since Moving to a Compressed Calendar




## Part V: Advice Gleaned from the Open-Ended Comments

When asked to provide clarification about their response choices, additional comments and their opinions about whether the move to a compressed calendar is working better than the traditional 18-week semester, the respondents shared many useful suggestions, observations and precautions, a summary of which follows:

### Perceived Benefits

- For students -- a decrease in withdrawals that often translate to better success rates (less student "burn out" because the semester is shorter)
- For students -- better persistence to the following semester
- For students -- an opportunity to complete more courses at a faster rate
- For students -- the ability to use intersessions to make up grade or unit deficiencies or to take a difficult course without other academic obligations
- For students -- a schedule that coincides with their children's (K-12), and with CSU and UC (for enrollment at these institutions, as well as ours)
- For students -- extended breaks between semesters that allow for internships and special programs, such as study in a foreign country, as well as time free from classes that helps with family and work commitments
- For students and faculty -- extended class time for each class meeting, allowing for deeper class discussion that can be directed to more complex levels
- For faculty -- extended breaks between semesters that allow for professional development, course development, curriculum development, and for advisory committee and adjunct faculty meetings

- For the institution -- increased FTES for those whose facilities are under-utilized
- For the institution -- college level research at one institution showed that "completion rates and GPAs were not adversely affected"

### Perceived Concerns that Were Raised

- Workloads increase, particularly for employees in student services, requiring a need to manage the use of "down" time efficiently to help reduce workload bottlenecks as much as possible at the peak times
- Works well for advanced students, but for students who struggle, there is less time to absorb complex information
- In the sciences, math, some technical courses and ESL -- covering all course content in the compressed format (other faculty members in these areas suggest when extra time is taken to reorganize courses, material can be covered)
- Some lab courses require a reduction in the number of lab exercises
- For those institutions that run intersessions, there is literally no down time for Classified Staff
- During the semester, less time to create a sense of community within faculty departments and college-wide and to participate in governance
- Long days for faculty when teaching, with very little unscheduled time each day
- Problems with grades being submitted in a timely fashion, impacting enrollment for the subsequent semester
- No down time in facility use for those that implemented intersessions, adversely affecting maintenance
- If you have a room shortage on campus, classes might have to be eliminated

### Advice and Cautions for Those Considering Implementation

- Change is always stressful, so find ways to help staff through the transition
- Plan very carefully before implementing -- for at least a year
- Combine the compressed calendar with a block schedule to allow students to take more classes each semester
- Expect a one- to two-year period to work out the "bugs"
- If you plan to implement a winter intersession, think carefully about initiating it during year one of implementation, since there is very little down time for student services and little time available for facility maintenance; it may be easier to phase in the winter intersession after the "bugs" have been worked out
- To insure that involvement in student activities does not decline, consider implementing an activity hour at lunch time, Monday-Friday during the semester
- Look carefully at those programs with state-mandated clinical hours in what is likely to be a complete redesign of the clinical component of these programs
- With the budget deficit looming, those institutions over cap may wish to wait or alternatively, to consider block scheduling, first, then moving to a compressed calendar when the budget improves
- Consider staggering shifts of staff on 10-month schedules for more appropriate coverage

## Part VI: Summary Comments

The move to a compressed calendar clearly has both pros and cons, making it a decision that should be carefully weighed. Institutionally, there are many compelling reasons to move to a compressed calendar. Moreover, for the most part, it appears to appeal to many students, although there is concern about its impact upon those who struggle. The impact upon faculty and staff must be carefully weighed. Many of the respondents felt that there were negative impacts upon the staff. However, many went on to suggest that in spite of this, it is a better format. At the very least, such a change, because of its complexity and organization-wide implications, should be made with very careful planning and perhaps when other multiple complex changes are not being implemented internally at the same time or are externally impacting the organization.

*This report was written by Judith Beachler, Director, Office of Institutional Research, Los Rios Community College District.*

*For further information please call: 916-568-3131, LRCCD Office of Institutional Research.*

*The response and comment reports, which complement this summary, are available on the IR Web Site at --* http://irweb.losrios.edu



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**U.S. Department of Education**
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

TM035161

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Title: | Results of the Alternative Calendar Survey:<br>A Survey of Faculty, Classified Staff and Administrators at California Community Colleges<br>That Have Moved from an 18-Week Semester to a Compressed Calendar - April 2003 | |
| Author(s): | Judith Beachler (Only summary report provided; contact author to obtain copies of survey reports.) | |
| Corporate Source: | Office of Institutional Research<br>Los Rios Community College District<br>1919 Spanos Ct., Sacramento, CA 95825 | Publication Date:<br>April 2003 |

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

**Level 1**

☐

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

**Level 2A**

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

**Level 2B**

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

*I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Signature: Judith A. Beachler | | Printed Name/Position/Title: Dr. Judith A. Beachler, Director | |
| Organization/Address: Office of Institutional Research, Los Rios CCD<br>1919 Spanos Ct., Sacramento, CA 95825 | | Telephone: (916) 568-3132 | FAX: (916) 568-3094 |
| | | E-Mail Address: beachlj@losrios.edu | Date: 06/23/03 |

## III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

| |
|---|
| Publisher/Distributor: |
| Address: |
| Price: |

## IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

| |
|---|
| Name: |
| Address: |

## V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

| |
|---|
| Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse: |

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

**ERIC Processing and Reference Facility**
**4483-A Forbes Boulevard**
**Lanham, Maryland 20706**

**Telephone:** 301-552-4200
**Toll Free:** 800-799-3742
**FAX:** 301-552-4700
**e-mail:** ericfac@inet.ed.gov
**WWW:** http://ericfacility.org